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Rural Queen: A Collection of Poems by Amanda Williams

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Oral Presentation O13.1

RURAL QUEEN: A COLLECTION OF POEMS BY AMANDA WILLIAMS

Amanda Williams and Joanne Diaz*

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This collection examines and explores the landscape, people, and culture of life in rural Southern Illinois. In my poems, I explore the themes of nature, manual labor, rural stereotypes, patriotism, and eroticism; in my preface, I discuss the difficulties involved in portraying these themes with an attention to authenticity, and I explain how I came to my understanding of what is “authentic” in the context of crafting poems. I draw inspiration from American poets Walt Whitman, Brian Turner, Edgar Lee Masters, and e.e. cummings, whose work offered insight into my poetic discussions of landscape, nature, the struggles associated with rural life, and the use of specific diction. I discuss the Early Modern poets that informed some of my formal explorations in the collection, particularly my allusion to the sonnet form, and I discuss the ways in which John Donne’s erotic verse guided my exploration of the metaphysical and visceral manifestations of love and lust in my poems. I also discuss the use of portraiture in my collection, and the ways in which I develop specific characters that exist in the landscape I create. The 29 poems in the collection, many guided by a first-person narrative voice, take the reader through experiences of work, loss, love, and a deep reverence for the idiosyncrasies of a rural life.